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» An Olympic Brand

London 2012 presents a golden opportunity for brands. Everyone naturally has a heightened level of interest in the Olympics due to their sheer exposure through multiple marketing channels (advertising, television, online, competitions, merchandise). This provides a great opportunity for businesses to strengthen or rejuvenate their brand image by associating it with an event that has universal appeal.

Brands associating themselves with the Games might focus on the atmosphere surrounding them or specific athletes or events. Choosing to link your brand to the Olympics implies brand values of high performance, competitiveness, being world-class, innovative and dynamic. In the eyes of the UK public, British brands associated with the Olympics could build an image of promoting national values, supporting British talent and encouraging a healthy lifestyle. More generally, companies can use London 2012 as a platform

for building emotional attachment and relationships with customers and other relevant audiences such as employees.

For a considerable financial commitment, several brands earned the enviable status of being an Olympic partner. Lloyds was the first company to sign up as an official sponsor. Being the only sponsor of the Olympic torch relay gives Lloyds the

opportunity to connect with communities all over Britain by organising local events to celebrate the arrival of the Olympic flame.

In order to mark its position as a 'national institution', British Airways made sure to earn the position of 'official airline' for the Games. A previously less well-known

brand in the UK, EDF has actively used the sponsorship to increase brand awareness by being the official electricity supplier of the Games. EDF has already used its Olympic credentials to create emotional attachment and consumer engagement by launching a campaign 'Team Green Britain' to encourage communities to do everyday things in a more sustainable way.

Deloitte, the official professional services provider for the Games has put its staff at the heart of delivering London 2012 through secondments and advisory work. A year before the Opening Ceremony, they had already provided more than 350,000 hours of expertise and this is expected to treble by the end of the Games.

What about brands that are not officially affiliated with the Games? The London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) has gone to great lengths to ensure that non-sponsoring brands are not publicised in any way with the event by not

allowing them to use the Olympic logo in communications or advertising in Olympic venues. With these restrictions, does this leave any room for other brands to capitalise on London 2012? The answer is a definite yes: brands can associate with the spirit of the Games without breaking the rules. One way is to sign up well-known athletes. Gillette has recruited Roger Federer and Sir Chris Hoy to take part in activities including coaching, workshops and training sessions at local clubs and community centres, all aiming to inspire the younger generation to take up sports earlier in life.

Sarah Storey, the first British athlete to compete both in the Olympics and Paralympics, acts as an ambassador for the jewellery chain Links of London. Further opportunities come from sponsoring sports federations. For instance, Siemens UK teamed up with British Rowing to become the sport's official 'High Performance Partner'.

However, high-profile sponsorship is not the only way to connect brands to the emotional power of the Games. A local business might consider

sponsoring an aspiring athlete, or providing the sports gear for a local junior football team. Such activities suggest a brand is genuinely involved with the local community, while conveying the spirit of the event. Creativity can help break through the clutter: for instance, a brand of dog food could promote its sponsorship of a guide dog charity and smartly communicate that guide dogs help visually impaired people in the UK lead active lives.

And of course, it is not just about the Games themselves but also about the atmosphere and the other events surrounding them. In a year when London is expecting a massive influx of visitors from both the UK and from abroad, Heineken and BT will be extending their collaboration to offer Wi-Fi in pubs. Arts and entertainment events not only in London, but across the UK, will benefit from an elevated level of attendance, attention and media coverage. The Innocent Smoothie brand will be reviving the tradition of its branded music festival, this time organised around the Olympics.

In some cases, indiscriminately playing up the Olympics might lead to unclear brand positioning: rather than directly associating themselves with the Games. Luxury brands such as Prada or Gucci would have much more to gain from involving with high-profile events such as London Fashion Week. In short, with careful planning, every brand can win at London 2012. MF

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